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ABSTRACT

As a regional institution serving the needs of 11 different island nations of the South West Pacific, the University of the South Pacific (USP) is, along with its on-campus face-to-face teaching activity, deeply committed to and reliant on distance study methods. Both of these activities at the university are the principal responsibility of a single body of teaching staff. This investigation, through the means of a structured questionnaire, studied the involvement of members of the university's teaching staff in instructional materials development for distance study. It inquired into the time they spent on such activity, their levels of satisfaction with the materials they produced, their preferences with regard to teaching and instructional materials development strategies, and their views on how the process of instructional development at the university could be improved. Responses revealed a rather unsatisfactory picture with requests for more time for materials development, better coordination and planning, greater consultation among colleagues, and adequate support services in instructional materials development for distance study. There was concern and consensus about the need for instructional materials developers to be adequately familiar with the USP region and the students for whom the materials are intended. Some respondents suggested that course writers, prior to developing instructional materials, be allowed to spend time in the region becoming familiar with the local learning context. Among the less frequently mentioned suggestions was that prospective course writers be sent abroad for short-term training courses in distance education and instructional materials development for distance teaching. (Author/GL)

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Faculty involvement in instructional materials development for distance study at the University of the South Pacific.

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As a regional institution serving the needs of eleven different island nations of the South West Pacific, the University of the South Pacific is, along with its on-campus face-to-face teaching activity, deeply committed to and reliant on distance study methods. Both these activities at the University are the principal responsibility of a single body of teaching staff.

This investigation, through the means of a structured questionnaire, studied the involvement of members of the University's teaching staff in instructional materials development for distance study. It enquired into the time they spent on such activity, their levels of satisfaction with the materials they produced, various preferences and their views on how the process of instructional materials development at USP could be improved.

Responses received revealed a rather unsatisfactory picture with a cry for, among other things, more time, advance planning, greater consultation among colleagues and adequate support services in instructional materials development for distance study.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF STUDY

The University of the South Pacific (USP) was established in 1968 on the recommendation of a Higher Education Mission to the South Pacific set up by the Governments of the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia to service the post-secondary education needs of what are now eleven independent states of the South West Pacific region. These are the Solomon Islands, the Cook Islands, the Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Republic of Nauru, Vanuatu, Niue, Tokelaus, the Kingdom of Tonga and the Independent State of Western Samoa.

As a regional institution its mandate comprises the 'maintenance, advancement and dissemination of knowledge by teaching, consultancy and research and the provision at appropriate levels of education and training responsive to the well-being and needs of the communities of the South West Pacific region' (USP Charter). The largest efforts of the university towards fulfilment of its mandate are currently directed towards the facilitation of face-to-face teaching on-campus and distance study opportunities in a variety of degree and sub-degree programmes. The teaching of these programmes both on-campus in the face-to-face mode

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dinates are better motivated in an environment that is supportive, challenging, and satisfying rather than one which is simply coercive and threatening) is: "Individuals will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which they are committed." The inference is that a "Theory Y" environment encourages higher levels of genuine commitment.

17. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) *Management of Organizational Behaviour*, Chapter 12.

18. Hersey and Blanchard: 1982, p. 273.

19. Hunkins: 1980, pp. 50-51.

20. Hunkins: (1980) pages 50 and 276.

21. Hunkins: 1980, pp. 58-59.

22. Hunkins: 1980; p. 16. The full quote is: "The ways in which we develop school programs (e.g. curriculum and instructional plans), and how we implement, maintain, and adjust these programs (the actual school experiences) must result from procedures that are systematic and consistent, procedures that must be delineated prior to the arrival of students in classrooms."

23. One of the most difficult problems faced by our distance education work is the undue pressure, from the PAC administration, to move post-haste into new courses. There seems to be very little appreciation of just how much time and effort is required for the proper development of distance courses.

24. Hunkins: 1980, p. 380. (See also p. 54.)

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and off-campus in the distance mode is the responsibility of the regular teaching departments within the Schools of the University. This arrangement, however, does not always find favour with most faculty members, since it frequently involves quite heavy demands on their own time and other departmental resources as well. Particular concern is expressed regarding the availability of sufficient visible rewards for participation in distance teaching activity especially.

A majority of the faculty therefore tend to devote a greater proportion of their time and energy to traditional face-to-face teaching, research and publication work, because it is this that offers them greatest potential for personal and professional development. Distance teaching activity tends to be relegated to a low priority position on staff time-tables. This triggers off a range of problems for other people involved in the production of instructional materials in print or other forms. As a member of one of these groups of people, this researcher became especially interested in the implications of the importance to regular faculty of the adoption of distance teaching activity, especially in an integrated system. This study was born out of this interest.

THE METHOD OF STUDY

A questionnaire was used as the principal data gathering device. It contained, apart from an introductory section on relevant personal information such as age, sex and work experience of respondents, a variety of questions on essentially three areas on the subject. These were:

- faculty familiarity with the USP context which included knowledge about the USP region, its student community and the prescribed roles of the University;
- faculty participation in distance teaching activity as opposed to their other formal (academic as well as administrative) work commitments at USP. Faculty were also asked here to identify their preferences with regard to teaching modes;
- faculty involvement in the development of instructional materials for distance study at USP which included, *inter alia*, an indication of faculty preferences with regard to instructional materials development strategies.

The questionnaire was initially conceived in three parts, each focused on one of the foregoing concerns. A trial run revealed that each needed considerable pruning and incorporation into one single questionnaire. A single questionnaire therefore with 25 items including one open-ended question was constructed — the final version of which was ready for administration around the middle of November 1984. Since this final edition of the questionnaire was confined to the investigation of faculty participation in distance teaching and their involvement in instructional materials development for distance study, it was administered only to the teaching staff of the University which included full-time teaching faculty, academic staff of the Institutes and laboratory assistants.

The investigation was confined to the following three Schools and five Institutes of the University namely: the School of Humanities (SOH); the School of Social and Economic Development (SSED); the School of Pure and Applied Sciences (SPAS); the Institute of Education (IOE); the Institute of Social and Administrative Studies (ISAS); the Institute of Mineral Resources (IMR); the Institute of Natural Resources (INR); and the Institute of Pacific Studies (IPS). The University's School of Agriculture and Institutes away from its Laucala Campus were not included in the investigation. The reason for their exclusion from the investigation was limited time available before which completed questionnaires had to be returned. Moreover the numbers of potential respondents left in this instance were so few that even if their completed questionnaires were returned on time, it was felt that they would not have significantly altered trends in the findings.

The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents via the internal mailing system of the University. Copies of the questionnaires accompanied by a standard covering letter with names of respondents were placed in the mail boxes of staff with the assistance and permission of the School's Administrative Assistant personnel. It was estimated that altogether between the three Schools and the five Institutes there were about a hundred eligible respondents at work at the time of investigation — November 1984. By mid-February 1985, 65 completed questionnaires were received back from the respondents.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH

This paper is confined to a discussion of only the last aspect in the questionnaire i.e. 'faculty involvement in the development of instructional materials for distance study at USP'. In the main, this section enquired into the extent of respondents' participation in the instructional materials development process; time they were able to devote to this activity; time they would have preferred to have; the degree to which they were satisfied with the materials produced; whether they would have preferred to work full-time or part-time; as part of a team or individually; and on forms of assistance they would have preferred in the instructional materials development process. Respondents were also given an opportunity to suggest ways of improving the instructional materials development process.

Faculty responsibility for instructional materials development

Respondents were required to indicate at the outset whether they had, since their appointment at USP, been responsible for the development of any instructional materials for use by extension students. Thirty-seven (58.7%) of the 63 respondents reported having had such responsibility while 26 (41.3%) said that they had not. There were two missing cases.

An attempt was made to get further insight into the characteristics of these respondents. Residential and professional status did not seem to have anything to do with faculty responsibility for instructional materials

Table 1: Responsible for instructional materials development.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	37	58.7
No	26	41.3
Total	63	100

development but job location did. For example, 90.5% (19 out of 21) of the respondents from SOH (the School of Humanities) had indicated involvement in instructional materials development whereas only 23.8% (5 out of 21) of the respondents from SPAS (the School of Pure and Applied Sciences) had indicated any such involvement. From SSED (the School of Social and Economic Development) 70.6% (12 out of 17) of the respondents had indicated being involved in instructional materials development. These figures indicate that faculty from SOH and SSED were, by far, more involved in instructional materials development than those from SPAS or from the Institutes of the University.

Participation in distance teaching usually involves input in instructional materials development – but not always. For example, nine out of 37 people who had claimed being responsible for instructional materials development had not been involved in extension teaching at USP. On the other hand three out of the 26 who had not had any responsibility for instructional materials development had been involved in extension teaching – one of whom had three years, the other two years and the third one year's extension teaching experience. But, overall (75.7%) it was observed that those who had been involved in extension teaching at USP had also been responsible for instructional materials development of some sort.

While a larger percentage of respondents had been involved in the development of instructional materials of some sort for distance study at USP, it is likely that some of them may have done more than the others in this regard. For example, on faculty responsibilities for courses in the extension mode it was discovered that, of the 65 respondents, 36 were able to claim some form of contribution to extension work during the period in question but there were 29 others who were unable to make any such claim. With regard to instructional materials development, some of the faculty could have merely been involved in preparing introductory booklets and tests etc. for extension students, while others may have developed the complete set of materials for an entire course including, sometimes, a video component as well. Faculty time required to carry out these occupations would have naturally varied.

In order to get an idea of the amount of time a faculty member would have characteristically spent on the development of instructional materials for distance study, respondents were asked to estimate the total number of hours they had spent on such work if they were 'principally' responsible for the development of a 'complete' set of materials for an extension course. These specifications were necessary otherwise a range of estimations would have emerged. Respondents were to take into account time spent on planning, research and gathering resources, writing and proof-reading. Forty-one of the 65 respondents in the study did not respond to this question implying that only 24 of the respondents could claim 'principal' responsibility for the development of instructional materials for extension teaching. The following times were recorded.

Table 2: Time spent on instructional materials development.

Total number of hours spent					
19	60	100	160	232	400
20	86	112	175	280	470
40	90	114	188	290	500
45	100	135	200	315	560

The times estimated by respondents indicated no particular trends. There is only one duplicate score, i.e. 100. The range indicated though is particularly interesting since, while on the one hand some members of the faculty seem to have been able to develop a 'full set of materials' in as incredibly little as 20 hours i.e. approximately three working days, others took a more realistic time of 500 hours i.e. approximately a full semester. From these estimates it is impossible to point at any norm. However in them certain other things are implicit. Firstly, it is possible that respondents derived some confusion from, and hence, various interpretations of, the meaning of the phrase 'principally responsible for the development of a complete extension course'. For example, the writing of a course around published textbooks and writing up all the essential materials for a course, such as a Course Book, Study Guide, etc. all from scratch, could have been taken to mean the same thing — hence the varying times. Yet it was the latter that was being specifically referred to in the question. Further it was possible that the response time was only the time that the faculty member could *afford* for the development of materials for his extension course. He or she would probably have liked a lot more time, such as one full year perhaps.

Respondents were given an opportunity to indicate this preference as well. Assuming a full-time allocation of 25-40 hours per week, they were asked to estimate the total number of weeks they would require to develop thoroughly the complete set of materials for a semester-long extension course. The following preferences were indicated.

Table 3: Time preferred for instructional materials development.

Total estimated number of weeks	Number of respondents	Percentage
3	1	1.9
4	7	13.5
5	4	7.7
6	8	15.4
7	4	7.7
8	6	11.5
10	11	21.2
14	3	5.8
15	2	3.8
16	1	1.9
18	1	1.9
20	1	1.9
25	1	1.9
26	1	1.9
40	1	1.9
Total	52	100

Fifty-two of 65 respondents in the study responded to this question. Most of them seem to have considered anything between four to 15 weeks quite sufficient i.e. from one month to about one full semester. These figures are context specific and cannot be taken to reflect any trends or norms. Each faculty member's estimation is possibly derived from, *inter alia*, his or her own confidence, expertise, resource base and conception of what a 'complete set of materials for an extension course' included or what they understood by 'develop thoroughly'. The figures otherwise clearly show what a good number of faculty at USP at the time considered to be a realistic time allocation for a thorough development of a full set of materials for an extension course.

On the question of the time faculty members were able to devote to the development of instructional materials, it was likely that perhaps that was all the time they had available for this work. If this was so, then many are likely to suggest that the materials they were able to produce could have been much better if they had more time. Such an enquiry was made where respondents were required to indicate on a scale from 'very' to 'not at all' the degree of their personal satisfaction with the materials they were able to produce in the time that was available. The following was observed.

Table 4: Degree of satisfaction with materials produced.

Levels of satisfaction	Number of respondents	Percentage
Very satisfied	8	25.8
Quite satisfied	15	48.4
Somewhat satisfied	8	25.8
Not at all satisfied	0	0
Total	31	100

Only 24 responses should have been recorded, since this question, in closely following the enquiry on the time faculty were able to spend on instructional materials development, was in fact referring to that instance in particular and where only 24 responses were recorded. But 31 responses were actually recorded. It seems that a few others who had developed some materials but had not carried any 'principal' responsibilities *per se*, also decided to respond. Nobody was 'not at all' satisfied. Naturally staff would not let anything go out if they were 'not at all satisfied' with it, we hope. Almost 50% of those who responded (48.4% exactly) claimed they were 'quite' satisfied. The rest went either way — 25.8% claimed they were 'very satisfied' and the other 25.8% claimed that they were only 'somewhat' satisfied.

Other faculty preferences regarding instructional materials development

The University of the South Pacific's integrated approach to higher education means that the same core of academic and administrative staff perform several responsibilities concurrently. While many actually prefer to work in an integrated approach, keeping a finger in every pie so to speak, many others would rather do one thing at a time and there are others to whom the mode of operation really does not matter.

In this investigation respondents were also asked, if they were to develop study materials for a semester-long course for offer by extension, whether they would prefer to do it full-time (relieved of other teaching duties) or part-time, along with some teaching as well. The following preferences were indicated.

While it is posible to conclude from these indications that there was a much greater preference, at least in this instance, for a full-time approach to instructional materials development, a good number of respondents chose to operate part-time — I would imagine on the condition that the time span was much longer. Yet, on the other hand, to some insignificant number of respondents the approach really did not matter.

Table 5: Preferences on commitment to instructional materials development process.

Preferences	Number of respondents	Percentage
Full-time	32	53.3
Part-time	19	31.7
No special preference	9	15.0
Total	60	100

In developing instructional materials for distance study, respondents were also asked to indicate which strategy they would have preferred to be working in, such as being part of a 'Course team' or working individually. The following preferences were indicated.

Table 6: Preferences on approaches to course development.

Course team approach	23	37.7
Individual approach	12	19.7
No particular preference	26	42.6
Total	61	100

Reasons for holding these preferences were not explored in this study but it is believed that several factors ranging from personal to institutional characteristics may have influenced such thinking. The indication by 42.6% of the respondents for no particular preference could have been derived from no particular established or popular work patterns in this regard at USP. Instructional materials development processes at USP have depended largely on the availability of time and human resources rather than very many professional considerations. It could also be seen as a reflection of respondents' own experience in instructional materials development. Having had little substantial experience in this regard, many were unlikely to have cultivated any particular tastes and were therefore prepared to experiment with any approach.

The indication by 37.7% of the respondents (a fairly large percentage) for a course team approach was probably a reflection of knowledge of the successful use of this approach elsewhere in the world such as the United Kingdom Open University and to some extent at USP itself, especially in the Department of Education in the School of Humanities. Respondents may have also felt that a team approach was a realistic and more practical approach in view of faculty time constraints and workloads at USP. This latter reason could also be offered in support of the 19.7% who chose to be working individually for, when time and resources are scarce, it may seem probably better for one person to get on with the job rather than dilly-dally in a team approach. Supporters of an individual approach could have also been people with greater self-confidence in a range of production related skills in instructional materials development.

Hence the other factor in instructional materials development is the availability of suitable support services such as audio/visual/graphics assistance and editorial help etc. Usually such assistance is limited – due mainly to financial constraints – but where they are available, their use is somewhat dependent on course writers' perceptions of what goes into instructional materials design. Believers in a team approach, for example, are likely to draw upon numerous kinds of expertise available, while those who see instructional materials development for distance teaching as no different from preparation for face-to-face teaching on-campus are likely to take everything on themselves. Then again, course writers are likely to differ – depending on their own experiences, skills and confidence levels – on the value and use of particular forms of support skills available to them. For example, the inexperienced course writer may place high value on Instructional Design assistance while the little-more-seasoned one would probably be content with just some proof-reading assistance only.

To get some idea of how faculty at USP perceived instructional materials development for distance teaching, respondents were asked to specify which **one** of a number of design expertise resources they would like to have to assist them in developing instructional materials for distance teaching, if the resource were available. The expertise included skills in the use of graphics; selection and use of suitable teaching strategies; use of audio/visual media and editing and proof-reading. The idea behind the requirement that respondents specify any **one** of the skills was to induce them into examining all of them carefully and making a choice. The skills chosen would reflect to some extent how a certain group of USP faculty perceived instructional materials development for distance teaching and, if there was any significant support for any one or two, then it would suggest the need for strengthening of resources in that regard at the University. First, this is what was observed.

A majority of the respondents preferred assistance with graphics work, editing and proof-reading skills which are synonymous with production work and which are usually not found amongst University teaching staff, *per se*, except amongst those who are involved in media and communica-

Table 7: Assistance preferred in instructional materials development.

Expertise most desirable	Number of respondents	Percentage
Use of graphics	18	32.1
Selection and use of suitable teaching strategies	11	19.6
Use of audio/visual media	6	10.7
Editing and proof-reading	21	37.5
Total	56	100

tion related subjects. Graphics work, editing and proof-reading in addition are time-consuming tasks and academics who are likely to consider these tasks as more cosmetic than anything else would rather leave them to other people with varying amounts of input from themselves. A relatively smaller number of respondents saw skilled assistance in the use of audio/visual media of particular importance in the instructional materials development process. In the case of the University of the South Pacific the use of audio/visual materials is also limited by lack of appropriate equipment, excepting audio playback facilities, at the study centres and student homes.

Skilled assistance in the selection and use of suitable teaching strategies, i.e. Instructional Design expertise, was not particularly popular either. 19.6% of the respondents saw this as more desirable. Several factors could have influenced this statistic. In the main, faculty teaching staff are likely to have considered selection of teaching strategies their own domain which they should be determining for themselves and their students, not someone else's from some other department who was not necessarily any more expert than themselves. In the event of such expertise being **resident** in another department, such as in the Extension Services at USP, faculty probably found it all the more inconvenient and somewhat humiliating to draw such assistance from someone else not specifically qualified (at least on paper) nor significantly more experienced than themselves on the development of instructional materials for their course. If such expertise, backed up by paper qualifications and an ongoing research commitment, were available and **resident** in their own department, faculty would be likely to draw upon it more readily and with less doubt implicit in the act. Nevertheless, the fact that approximately 20% of the respondents saw such assistance as more desirable than other skills implied that at least among some this skill was deficient or in demand.

The foregoing faculty preferences are only an indication of some of the conceptions held. These need further exploration and substantiation. For the time being, it seems faculty prefer to see Instructional Design expertise, such as that being made available by Extension Services, to be confined to 'book production' work, namely, graphics illustration, editing and proof-reading functions. Determination of suitable teaching strategies would better remain the responsibility of personnel resident in the teaching departments themselves, if possible, specifically those recruited for their expertise and research commitment in the theory and practice of instructional technology.

On improvement of the instructional materials development process

Towards the end of this investigation respondents were requested to express their views on how the process of developing instructional materials for distance teaching at USP could be improved. Of the 65 respondents in the entire study 41 (63.1%) took this opportunity to make comments. It is assumed that those who refrained from making comments either did not feel qualified to do so – possibly because of no distance teaching and/or instructional materials development experience – or simply did not feel like expending their energies and time to make detailed comments. Some respondents had categorically stated the former as a reason for their inability to respond.

Who were the people that took the time to respond at length on this critical component of distance teaching activity at USP? Were they largely members of faculty who had been involved in distance teaching and/or instructional materials development for distance teaching? Were they from those enthusiastic and innovative persons who readily dispense their views with regard to anything or were they indeed all sorts of people? If it was discovered that only those assoicated with distance teaching in some form had made the effort to comment, then one could assume that there was no significant **overall** concern amongst faculty for improving the instructional materials development process at USP. However, if other people had made the effort as well, then one could assume that there was probably a general concern amongst faculty in this regard.

Firstly, with regard to respondents' association with distance teaching activity, it was discovered that of the 41 who had taken up the invitation and made a comment 31 (75.6%) had been involved in the development of instructional materials for distance teaching at USP. While the remaining 10 (24.4%) could not claim any such involvement in instructional materials development, it is not possible to preclude them from having had any other form of association with distance education activity. However of the 24 who had not taken up the invitation in the questionnaire to express their views 16 (72.7%) had not registered any involvement in the development of instructional materials for distance study at USP – the eight others had. While these percentages tend to suggest that the respondents' participation in distance teaching and/or instructional materials development for distance study seem to have influenced their tendency to make a comment, they were not conclusive enough to suggest that this influence was in fact significant.

It is also likely that respondents' level of familiarity with the overall aims of the University (and more specifically its policy on its teaching modes) may have influenced their tendency to make a comment. So these were observed and it was discovered that 35 (85.4%) of the 41 respondents who had made comments had indicated greater familiarity with USP's overall aims. On the other hand of the 24 who had not made a comment 19 (79.2%) claimed equally greater familiarity as well and so thwarted any chance of a positive association being derived from the foregoing percentage. With regard to respondents' familiarity with USP's declared policy on its teaching modes, no significant associations were visible between this and their tendency to comment or not. Only 25 (61%) of the 41 who had made a comment indicated greater familiarity, while those who hadn't made a comment were equally divided.

Other more easily quantifiable characteristics of respondents and non-respondents to the item were examined as well. No particular associations were noticeable between respondents' residential categories, their professional status and their tendency to comment. The distributions here were more a reflection of the sample. On their job locations, however, it was noticed once again, that a greater percentage of respondents from SOH and SSED than SPAS had made the effort to comment. For example, of the 22 respondents from SOH, 17 (77.3%) had commented and five (22.7%) had not. From SSED of the 17 respondents, 10 (58.8%) had comented and 7 (41.2%) had not. Whereas from SPAS, of the 22 respondents only 12 (54.5%) had made comments and 10 (45.5%) had not. It seemed, then, that greater experience and/or association with distance teaching did at least induce respondents to make a comment on the instructional materials development process at USP. This conclusion is lent further support by the observation that, overall, those who had made comments had greater numbers of years of distance teaching experience at USP than those who had not.

Respondents' comments on the improvement of the instructional materials development process varied. Some were brief while others were lengthy and comprehensive. Some were very supportive of the current system, while others were not so satisfied with it. On the whole a wide array of suggestions were received, while there were some common areas as well.

Comment summarised

One frequent comment was on time. More than a dozen of the respondents emphasized the importance of having adequate time for the development of instructional materials for distance teaching. It was suggested that a minimum of one complete semester be allocated to the development of all the instructional materials for a distance study course. Many believed as well, that instructional materials development should be a full-time commitment and that undesirable interference in it from clumsy bureaucratic structures, as well as on-campus commitments, must be eliminated.

The second greatest concern of respondents was the need for consultation in the development process. Views on this stressed that, while principal responsibility could lie with one or two individuals, there was immense merit in a team input, which would for a start serve to ease up the load of individuals, keep a check on content and compatibility of style etc. as well as bringing together a variety of ideas and experiences to the process. Greater consultation across disciplines, departments and, above all, with Extension Services and its components was absolutely essential towards the improvement of the instructional materials development process in distance teaching.

Thirdly, there was concern and consensus amongst respondents on the need for developers of instructional materials to be adequately familiar and versed with both the key characteristics of the USP region and the students for whom the materials were meant. It was felt that too few course writers had adequate grasp of the learning environment of their students. Some suggested that course writers, prior to developing instructional materials, be allowed to spend time in the region becoming familiar with the local learning contexts.

Fourthly, there was consensus amongst respondents on the need for adequate resource materials. Respondents stressed the importance of having adequate reference materials in the library and sample packages of distance learning materials as well from other institutions for course writers to consult.

Fifthly, there was consensus amongst respondents on the need for planning. It was stressed that better co-ordination and planning of time and manpower are essential in the development of instructional materials. Too often poor planning of time and staff allocation resulted in shoddy course packages. Plan well ahead for these commitments they said!

The sixth area of general concern was the availability of support services for instructional materials development such as graphics work, typing, editing and proof-reading. While there were some requests that were fairly general in this regard, there were others that specifically preferred to have assistance in graphics work, typing, proof-reading and editing. There were a few requests for 'Course Developers' in Extension Services with specific subject expertise, such as in the Natural Sciences, to assist the Science faculty in its distance teaching efforts.

There were several other less-frequently-mentioned suggestions and requests as well. One of these was the suggestion that prospective course writers be sent abroad on short-term training courses in distance education and instructional-materials-development for distance teaching. Another suggestion was that the University ought to encourage the attachment of seconded staff with appropriate expertise from other institutions to its own teaching departments, though such a strategy was strongly opposed in this same study by some others on the grounds that these so-called 'consultants/experts' from abroad had no real understanding of the realities of the USP region and were therefore ineffective. There was a strong suggestion that faculty who undertook to develop instruc-

tional materials for distance study ought to first, possess a solid grasp of their subject matter and secondly, be committed to producing the best possible materials. Once produced for the first time, these materials ought to be on a trial-run of at least two years.

Towards ensuring a better effort from course writers it was suggested that there should be adequate staffing, both to develop instructional materials in the first instance and also to effectively implement them. The latter meant more local face-to-face tutorial assistance and increased summer sessions, especially in the Natural Science subjects with laboratory work components. One suggestion for coping with the staffing situation was to allocate staff face-to-face teaching responsibilities in one semester and distance teaching responsibilities in another, so that staff had ample time to devote to each mode. The other suggestion was to reduce on-campus teaching commitments of staff who were involved in developing instructional materials for distance study.

On a more fundamental note it was suggested that a basic improvement in the instructional materials development process at USP would be to first recognise that it was a professional activity which required specific skills and training. There was also the suggestion that the institution ought to seek to give equal prominence to distance teaching in its mainstream functions rather than relegating it to the next best spot.

CONCLUSION

These were the responses and observations of staff 2½ years ago. Today the University of the South Pacific has declared an even greater commitment and reliance on distance study methods in the fulfilment of its objectives. While the actual processes of instructional materials development for distance study have not changed very much since 1984 i.e. the year of this study, there have been some improvements since then. It would certainly be worthwhile recording current trends and perceptions of staff in this regard to see how these have developed.

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